



New York District Office

News Release

Release Date: December 17, 2004
Release Number: NYDO-05-09

Contact: John J. Miller (212) 264-7770
e-mail: john.miller@sba.gov

African-American Owned DasNet Corporation Racks Up Fed Contracts With a Little Help from the SBA's 8(a) Program

Hauppauge, NY— Since its formation in 1997, telecommunication services provider DasNet has experienced tremendous growth and become a major employer on Long Island by pursuing federal and overseas contracts abandoned by telecom giant AT&T.

DasNet founder and owner David Salley had been working for 6 years for AT&T as Middle East Program Manager over its engineering department. Salley and his team had taken great pride in developing the market and generating loyal customers for AT&T by designing, installing and maintaining telecommunications networks and systems. When Salley learned that the company was intending to drop its business in the Middle East, he decided it was time for him to pursue his entrepreneurial dream.

At the same time, it occurred to Salley that he may have a ready-made customer base in the Middle East with its abandonment by AT&T. He shared his ideas with his engineering team in the hope of bringing team members into his proposed new venture.

An amicable “break-up” between AT&T and Salley and his team was arranged upon acceptance of a negotiated offer. DasNet was then born in 1997 and quickly made a name for itself by successfully completing engineering sub-contracts for major federal government prime contractors. The company now employs 65 individuals and another 65 direct subcontractors.

But the first two years of business were very difficult for DasNet and Salley was looking for all the help he could get. He learned of the U.S. Small Business Administration's 8(a) Program which helps certified small disadvantaged businesses compete for federal government contracts. Salley applied for certification and DasNet was accepted into the program in 1999. With the help of the 8(a) Program, it wasn't long before DasNet was performing as prime contractor for systems integration services for the likes of the State Department, the Air Force and the Army. DasNet also pursued business outside of the 8(a) Program and landed contracts with the Royal Saudi Air Force as well as his former employer. Without the 8(a) Program, DasNet's growth

would have been hampered by a much longer learning curve when it comes to the federal contracting arena. “My company would not have been able to engage with clients that were eager to have their programs on contract within the shortest period of time, which could only be conducted through a flexible sole source vehicle like 8(a) provided,” said Salley.

Based upon his start-up experiences, Salley has advice he would like to share with other entrepreneurs in the early stages of their development. “Remain focused on your core capabilities, determine who your potential clients are, invest in your key employees and continuously look for new customers through existing contract clients,” said Salley.

Salley is also heavily involved in the community due to his belief in the development of strong minds and the rewards of team work. Through DasNet he sponsors corporate basketball and softball teams, a little league softball team, charity golf tournaments, employee tuition assistance programs, college educational assistance for local non-employees and the National FIRST Robotics Program.

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